

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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AMEMBASSY PRAIA POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BISSAU 0853

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PU
SUBJECT: A REPLACEMENT FOR PRIME MINISTER FRANCISCO MENDES:
WHITHER THE PAIGC?

REF: BISSAU 0841

1. THE ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF PRIME MINISTER FRANCISCO MENDES AT AGE 39 HAS LEFT NOT ONLY HIS COMRADES IN ARMS OF THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE BUT THE ENTIRE NATION SORROWFUL. THE PAIGC MUST NOW DECIDE ON WHO AND HOW TO SUBSTITUTE HIM IN THE VACANT POSITION.

2. IMMEDIATELY UPON NEWS OF MENDES' DEATH, SPECULATIONS BEGAN ON WHO WOULD BE HIS LIKELY SUCCESSOR. THERE ARE SEVERAL OBVIOUS CANDIDATES WITH THE PROPER CREDENTIALS. GIVEN THE IMBALANCE OF POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY IN THE GOVERNMENT HELD BY CAPE VERDEANS OVER GUINEANS THE SUCCESSOR IS LIKELY, IF POSSIBLE, TO BE NATIVE BORN GUINEAN OF GUINEAN AFRICAN DESCENT. THE PROBLEM OF ETHNICITY WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID IN A COUNTRY DOMINATED NOW AS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE BY A GROUP THAT
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IS PHENOTYPICALLY DIFFERENT AND HIGHLY ENDOGAMOUS HAS NEVER BEEN COMPLETELY SUBMERGED. ETHNIC DIFFERENCES HAVE BEEN, TO DATE, ATTENUATED BY THE COMRADESHIP AND PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS FORMULATED DURING THE LONG STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE. HOW THE PAIGC ORCHESTRATES THE CHOICE OF MENDES' SUCCESSOR WILL DECIDE IF THIS FACADE OF UNITY WILL BE RENT BY PER-

SONAL AMBITION AND DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION.

3. THE PROBLEM FACING THE PAIGC IS NOT EASY, SUITABLE CANDIDATES OF GUINEAN AFRICAN DESCENT ARE NOT NUMEROUS NOR AS WELL PLACED IN THE PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT AS CAPE VERDEANS. THERE ARE SEVERAL YOUNGER NATIVE GUINEANS WHO WOULD BE SUITABLE IN PERHAPS FIVE YEARS BUT NOT ABLE TO STEP INTO BREACH AT THIS MOMENT. THE NEW PRIME MINISTER WILL PROBABLY BE CHOSEN FROM AMONG THOSE HOLDING COMMISSARIAT (MINISTERIAL) RANK, THE COUNCIL OF STATE, OR HIGH-RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS, AND HOPEFULLY, BE A HERO OF THE INDEPENDENCE WAR.

4. GIVEN THE PARAMETERS WITHIN WHICH APPARENTLY THE SELECTION IS LIKELY BE MADE THERE ARE PERHAPS THREE STRONG CANDIDATES: UMARO DJALO, CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE, MEMBER OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF THE STRUGGLE, AND, IMPORTANT IN A STATE APPROXIMATELY 35 PERCENT MOSLEM, A MOSLEM, JOAO BERNARDO VIEIRA, COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES, SECRETARY OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE STRUGGLE AND PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY; AND CARMEN PERIERA, A HEROINE OF THE INDEPENDENCE WAR REGARDED AS THE SYMBOL OF GUINEAN AND FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFLICT, MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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WOMEN'S COMMISSION OF THE PAIGC, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AND CHIEF OF THE GUINEA-BISSAU RED CROSS.

5. THESE, CURRENTLY, SEEM TO BE THE IDEAL CANDIDATES FOR THE VACANT JOB. THE INNER DYNAMICS OF THE PAIGC HAVE BEGUN TO OPERATE ON THE SELECTION AND THE JOCKEYING FOR POSITION HAS REMAINED WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF PARTY DISCIPLINE.

6. THE CHOICE OF THE REPLACEMENT FOR MENDES HAS OBVIOUSLY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE CHARACTER IF NOT IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION FOR THE GOGB. THE PROBLEM IN ANALYZING THE POSSIBILITIES IS THE STILL SHROUDED ROLE MENDES PLAYED IN THE GOGB. EXTERNAL OBSERVERS ARE STILL UNABLE TO DETERMINE IF HE INDEED WAS A PROMINENT POLICY MAKER OR MERELY PRESIDENT CABRAL'S ASSISTANT. IF HE WAS ACTUALLY IMPORTANT FIGURE, HE OPERATED DISCREETLY BEHIND SCENES AND OBVIOUSLY BACKED CABRAL'S MODERATE POLICIES.

7. THE OBVIOUS CHOICES DISCUSSED ABOVE PRESENT THE

SAME PROBLEM FOR OBSERVERS. WE SUSPECT (ON VERY LITTLE HARD INFORMATION) THEY ARE SOMEWHAT MORE "RADICAL" AND IDEOLOGICAL THAN CABRAL. VIEIRA IS REPUTED TO BE THE MOST POPULAR SINGLE FIGURE IN THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE MILITARY. HIS ABSENCE IN CUBA ON A ONE-YEAR STUDY MISSION REMAINS A PUZZLE. THERE ARE RUMORS THAT HE IS ON A POLITICAL REST CURE, PRESCRIBED BY CABRAL AND COUNTRY. HIS ABSENCE FROM THE RECENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION, OF WHICH HE IS PRESIDENT, AND FROM THE MENDES' FUNERAL WERE WIDELY NOTICED.

8. IN ANY CASE, THE FIRST RESULT OF THE DEATH OF MENDES IS TO PUT INTO QUESTION PRESIDENT CABRAL'S CONFIDENTIAL

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ATTENDANCE AT THE KHARTOUM OAU SUMMIT (JULY 17) AND HIS LONG PROJECTED TRIP TO BRUSSELS (JULY 19). THE DECISION WILL BE MADE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.
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